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DRAFT

24 April 1950

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS A TARGET

FOR THE ATOMIC BOMB

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THE PROBLEM

1. The problem is to establish the degree of danger to the United States Federal Government inherent in the Soviet possession of the atomic bomb.

DISCUSSION

2. GRE 91-49 brings out that the Soviet possession of the atomic bomb cannot be used as the basis for a conclusion that the Politburo will change its concept of the place of war as an instrument of Russo-Communist expansion. The estimate concludes that all evidence indicates the correctness of the long-standing belief that no conjecture concerning the imminence of war can go beyond the statement that undoubtedly the Soviet leaders will resort to military action at any time they consider it advantageous to do so; the Soviet possession of the atomic bomb simply brings closer, in purely empirical terms, the time when the Politburo may determine that military aggression would be advantageous.

3. Yet the conclusions of GRE 91-49 can bring us no feeling of relief from the threat of war. The Politburo is a small body of men which can make quick, drastic decisions, and there is no assurance that we shall have evidence in advance as a basis for reading their thoughts. Furthermore, the Soviet Armed Forces, as currently disposed, are already developed for attack. All that is required to set them in motion in offensive action is the command to move. Thus it is very likely, whenever the Politburo decides on aggression,

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that war will come with complete strategic surprise to the United States.

4. It is a current general assumption that war, when it comes, will take the form of a march westward and southward to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean by the Red Army, supported by the inauguration of an intensive submarine campaign and by D-day, H-hour surprise attacks employing the atomic bomb and designed to destroy carefully selected targets in the United States. In this paper, there is no reason to quarrel with this general assumption, since it is a sound assumption, and there appears to be no other equally valid. But it is relevant to the subject of this paper to examine the reasoning which may influence the Soviet High Command in the choice of targets for H-hour attack.

5. The Soviet High Command is well aware of the two most important aspects of our arrangements for defense, because they are thoroughly advertised by us. First, they know that we rely on the defense forces provided by the nations subscribing to the North Atlantic Treaty to resist the march of the Red Army; they know equally well that these defense forces are dependent on American leadership for effective cohesion. Second and concurrently, they are aware of our reliance on the tactic of swift and violent retaliation as a delaying factor to screen our mobilization. The Soviet High Command must plan to neutralize these known defense arrangements as thoroughly as possible, and will bear in mind the desirability of the accomplishment of this objective in the choice of targets for H-hour attack.

6. Knowing the concentration of agencies of the Federal Government in Washington, the Soviet High Command undoubtedly must realize that a very effective way to sabotage the cohesion of Western European defense forces and at the same time to decrease the effectiveness of our retaliatory action (thus

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killing two birds with one stone), would be to disrupt, to the greatest extent possible, the initial United States reaction to the opening of hostilities. The most simple way to disrupt the initial United States reaction would be to disrupt the central governmental and military complex in Washington, which could be accomplished by destroying or neutralizing the downtown Washington-Pentagon area. Effective in any event, an attack designed to accomplish such a purpose would be disastrous for the United States if delivered during office hours on a weekday so that personnel would be destroyed, as well as buildings, records and facilities. Such a task is well within the capabilities of the Soviet long-range bomber force, since only a small number of aircraft would be involved, and the task could be performed as a one-way mission with maximum tactical surprise. There is no defense against such an attack delivered as the first overt act of war. Only one, or not more than two or three, atomic bombs need be expended. In fact the operation would be so economical when evaluated in the light of the results which could be achieved, that it would appear that it is almost sure to be undertaken if we continue to maintain the present concentration of all-important agencies in Washington. This conclusion is reinforced when it is considered that such an attack on Washington would not tax Soviet facilities sufficiently to prevent similar attacks on other high priority targets. In any event, some thought as to other possible H-hour targets leads to the additional conclusion that Washington would head the list. The United States offers no other targets the neutralization or destruction of which would be so immediately remunerative on the first day of war.

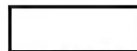
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7. In their thinking along these lines, there must be just one fly in the Soviet ointment: They must expect that the United States Government will take steps adequate to reduce the attractiveness of Washington as a target.

CONCLUSIONS:

8. The following conclusions are logical:

- a. War with the USSR can come with complete strategic surprise;
- b. The opening day of war is likely to bring attacks on carefully selected targets in the United States, employing the atomic bomb;
- c. It is a logical deduction that Washington will be maintained at the top of the Soviet target list as long as the present concentration of Government agencies remains in the city;
- d. The small number of atomic bombs adequate to destroy or neutralize the activities of the Federal Government in Washington can be delivered from the air with complete tactical surprise.



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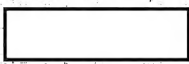
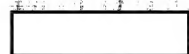
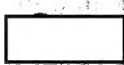
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RETURN TO

SUBJECT: *Work of CIA Emergency Planning Cmte.*

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Herewith is a draft which I have written for  of  
 OSE (OSE representative on the CIA/EPC). He and I are producing  
 the "sales talk" required to back up any recommendations  
 the committee makes as the result of  last instruc-  
 tions (see M/R, ER-O-9944, 13 Apr 50, Subject: Guidance for the  
 CIA Emergency Planning Committee).  has some ideas and  
facts to add that are more hair-raising than mine. *3*

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